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Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Observer Mission in Bougainville (Papua New Guinea)

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to the letter dated 23 December 2004 from the President of the Security Council to the Secretary-General (S/2004/1016), in which the Council, inter alia, took note of the Secretary-General's recommendation to extend the mandate of the United Nations Observer Mission in Bougainville (UNOMB) until 30 June 2005, and requested the Secretary-General to present a report on "an assessment of the ground situation and on a mission-closure plan". The present report reviews the progress achieved by the parties to the Bougainville Peace Agreement since the last briefing to the Council, on 22 December 2004, in the preparations for elections, in the reconciliation with the leaders of the "no-go zone", in weapons disposal, in the law and order situation and in post-conflict peacebuilding. It also elaborates on the Mission's closure plan.

II. Assessment of the situation

A. Preparations for the election of an autonomous Bougainville Government

2. The Provincial Administration of Bougainville, with the support of the National Election Commission, has made detailed plans for the upcoming elections, which will bring about the establishment of the first autonomous Bougainville Government. All electoral processes have been costed and the estimates submitted to the national Government for funding approval. The Administration has finalized a report on the boundaries of provincial constituencies. It is working on updating and consolidating the common roll of the province, including the "no-go zone". It is expected that the consolidated common roll will be completed by 7 April 2005.

3. On 11 March, the Transitional Consultative Committee, which is composed of members of the Bougainville Interim Provincial Government and Bougainville People's Congress, asked my representative, head of the United Nations Observer Mission in Bougainville, to provide clarifications on whether a potential delay in electoral processes could force the Mission to stay beyond 30 June 2005. A follow-up question-and-answer session helped the Committee make a firm commitment to proceed with elections according to the previously discussed plan. The Committee

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decided that polling will be held from 20 May to 2 June 2005. This decision has been gazetted.

4. The elections will be for the presidency and the Bougainville legislature, to be known as the House of Representatives. The House will consist of 33 members representing their respective constituencies, together with three women and three former combatant members, one of each elected for each of Bougainville's three regions — North, Central and South. The President will be elected directly on a Bougainville-wide ballot, while the Speaker will be elected from outside the House by its members.

5. The Bougainville electoral officers are experienced and have conducted elections on Bougainville in previous years, the latest being the national elections held in 2002. The Bougainville leaders are working hard to maintain their past good record during the upcoming election of the autonomous Bougainville Government. Plans are in place to provide security for personnel and ballot boxes. The community police, assisted by the regular Bougainville police, will provide the required assistance. Community leaders and volunteers from among former combatants, with the facilitation of UNOMB, are carrying out an election public-awareness campaign with the rank-and-file members of the Mekamui Defence Force (MDF) in the "no-go zone". As a result of this campaign, a significant number of MDF members have expressed support for and willingness to take part in the elections, giving assurances not to interfere with the democratic process.

6. Both the national Government and the Bougainville leaders expressed their desire to have international observers present during the elections. In their view, such a presence will enhance the confidence and trust of the Bougainville people in the peace process and in their ability to exercise their right to vote in a free and transparent manner. The Papua New Guinea Government is working on a request to the United Nations, regional organizations and interested neighbouring countries to provide election observers.

II. Developments around the "no-go zone"

7. In what can be described as a historic event, UNOMB facilitated a meeting on 8 March 2005 where several political leaders of Bougainville, former military leaders and combatants of the Bougainville Revolutionary Army and the Bougainville Resistance Force discussed for the first time the peace process with 100 key players of MDF. At the meeting it was decided to continue to hold similar exchanges in the near future in order to sort out differences and to work together for the better future of Bougainville. The Mekamui representatives also pledged not to interrupt the electoral process.

8. At the second meeting, held in Arawa on 17 March 2005, the participants discussed the issues of lifting the last roadblock at Morgan Junction, reconciliation between Francis Ona, the leader in the "no-go zone", and Joseph Kabui, President of the Bougainville People's Congress, and the upcoming elections. Mr. Kabui has expressed his readiness to meet Mr. Ona to initiate the process of reconciliation. Sources close to Mr. Ona have also informed UNOMB that he is ready to reciprocate. Such a reconciliation would be a breakthrough in relations between their factions. It would bode well for a potential opening of the "no-go zone" and

the provision of government services to the population living in the zone. UNOMB will continue to provide logistical and other support to the parties in this matter.

C. Weapons disposal

9. UNOMB has destroyed most of the 2,014 weapons originally placed in containers in accordance with the weapons disposal plan. It is working now, through community leaders, to persuade former combatants to destroy the remaining weapons, which are kept in secure storage, and UNOMB is optimistic that the issue of weapons disposal will be positively resolved before the election. To this end, UNOMB will maintain close consultations with both the national Government and the Bougainville parties.

D. Law and order

10. The general situation on the ground is steadily improving. The deployment of Bougainville regular police in Bougainville has so far produced good results. The people of Bougainville have repeatedly commented on security improvements and increased freedom of movement as tangible outcomes of the successful implementation of the Peace Agreement. As of now, 116 Bougainville Police are on active duty in the province, and 50 more will be graduating from the Police Academy in Bomana, Port Moresby, by the end of this month. They will be deployed before the election starts. In addition, 383 community police officers are functioning in their respective villages in most areas on the island. The police will play an important role in the provision of security in the upcoming elections. The Bougainville Administration and the Police meet regularly to coordinate their respective roles in the preparations for and during the conduct of elections.

11. The National Court has resumed its hearings in Buka for the first time in four years to try a backlog of cases that have accumulated since then. Progress has already been achieved in this area. The establishment of correctional institutions, however, is lagging behind, thereby impinging on human rights issues. To remedy the situation, the Provincial Administration is working in close cooperation with the representatives of the Law and Justice Programme, funded by the regional donors, to expedite the construction and renovation of the required institutions.

E. Post-conflict peacebuilding

12. The enormous rehabilitation and recovery challenges that the autonomous Bougainville Government will confront upon its establishment will call for speedy delivery and decision-making mechanisms; capacity-building will have to be one of its priorities. As an ongoing process, it will require the continued assistance of United Nations agencies and programmes and the donor community.

13. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) will implement its Bougainville Planning and Community Support Programme project. Its focus will be on: (a) capacity-building in planning and management skills, (b) support for the peace process through leadership, human rights advocacy and social activities and (c) strengthening economic development and livelihood opportunities.

14. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) plans to expand its activities in Bougainville in 2005 through the conduct of further courses within the volunteer teacher training programme. Ongoing support will be provided to a total of 60 volunteer teachers from 40 schools in the "no-go zone" who have already undergone training and received teaching materials in the form of "school in the box" kits. UNICEF will work jointly with the Peace Foundation Melanesia to carry out peace training activities for children, young people and elders. About 150 people from the "no-go zone" are expected to be covered by this programme. Other identified activities of UNICEF will include the provision of supplies and transport to the Provincial AIDS Councils, the establishment of a women's and children's desk in Arawa, a pilot project on a juvenile justice programme and community-based inquiries into violence against children.

15. Donor assistance for the implementation of autonomy on Bougainville will be channelled through the Governance and Implementation Fund. The agreed steps and priorities of that implementation are provided for in the Joint Working Plan of the Papua New Guinea Government and the Bougainville Administration. Given the presence of various international players, UNDP and major donors are encouraging the Bougainville Administration to take the lead in coordinating the distribution of assistance to be provided by the international community in accordance with the priorities specified in the Joint Working Plan.

III. Mission-closure plan

16. Given the progress achieved by the parties in weapons disposal and in the preparations for elections, and barring any unforeseen complications, UNOMB will complete its mandate and formally close down its activities on 30 June 2005. In the interim, the Mission will continue to monitor the situation prior to and during the election in order to be ready, if requested by any of the parties, to verify and certify substantial compliance by the parties in the handing-in of weapons and whether the level of security is conducive to the holding of elections. Any complaints or inquiries in this connection would have to be promptly considered by the Peace Process Consultative Committee, chaired by UNOMB.

17. The developments on the ground, especially the initiation of the reconciliation process between the Bougainville leaders and MDF, facilitated by UNOMB, bode well for the successful conduct of elections and the establishment of the autonomous Bougainville Government. In this light, UNOMB plans to call the last meeting of the Peace Process Consultative Committee in mid-June 2005, immediately after the elections have been concluded, in order formally to dissolve this main body established under the Agreement, as it will have achieved its founding objectives.

IV. Observations

18. Given the pace of electoral preparations and the commitment of the Government of Papua New Guinea and the Bougainville parties to hold elections from 20 May to 2 June 2005, I expect that an autonomous Bougainville Government will be set up before the closure of UNOMB on 30 June 2005. With the establishment of the Bougainville Government, the political role of the United Nations in the peace process will have been successfully completed. From that

moment, the United Nations developmental and humanitarian agencies and the donor community will take the lead in helping the autonomous Bougainville Government to implement its rehabilitation and capacity-building programmes, thereby consolidating the outcomes of the political process.

19. The success of the Bougainville peace process so far has been secured through consistent and cooperative efforts of the Papua New Guinea Government and the Bougainville parties to the peace agreements and the strong support of the neighbouring States and donor countries. UNOMB and its predecessor have also played a significant role in facilitating those efforts. They have set an example of how a small United Nations team can work efficiently and effectively.